

The Warner House Association Newsletter Updates – November 2020

Meet our Vice Chair: *Melissa Walker*



Melissa Walker.
Photo by Morgan Karanasios

We welcome Melissa Walker to the Executive Board of the Warner House. Melissa was elected in January 2020 to serve as Vice Chair of the Warner House Association Board of Governors. She brings an extensive background and experience with her to enrich us here at the Warner House.

Melissa studied at Baerum Husflids Forening in Oslo, Norway in their Certificate Program of Norwegian Weaving in 1979 and received a Masters in Art Education from the Rhode Island School of Design in Providence, Rhode Island in 1984.

She is currently a member of the League of N.H. Craftsmen where she served as Education Coordinator in 1995. She coordinated the activities for the League's statewide education program during that time. She also served as Executive Director of the New Hampshire Farm Museum, Inc. in Milton, NH, from 1984-1995. During that time she was responsible for the administration and development of the museum, including: displays, educational programs, publicity, newsletters, volunteer recruitment and training, fund raising, budget preparation and evaluation. She also supervised seven part-time staff members.

Melissa has served as an interpreter and teacher at Strawberry Banke Museum from 2000-2017, as an interpreter at the Warner House from 2001-2004 and as an interpreter at the Wentworth Coolidge Mansion from 2013 to the present. She is a resident of Madbury, NH, where she has served as a member of the Planning Board and is active in the Madbury Historical Society serving as President from 2015-2019.

She lives in Madbury, NH on a Christmas tree farm which she and her family operate. If you have the chance to speak to Melissa, when we can meet in person again, take the opportunity to speak with her and learn more about her life and experiences. Oh yes, she is also an excellent cook and weaver extraordinaire!

In Remembrance: *Patricia (Pat) Caron*

We are saddened to inform you of the death of Pat Caron of Dover, NH on August 3, 2020. Pat had been a volunteer at the Warner House for the past four years and has served on the Board of Governors. No further details are available. She will be missed.

A New Tree, a Gift from the Portsmouth Garden Club

Portsmouth Garden Club volunteers have tended the Warner House gardens for over 25 years. A plaque acknowledging this connection was placed on the Chapel Street fence near the garden gate last year to commemorate this association. It was designed by garden club members and Warner House business member, Phineas Graphics. Just after the plaque was installed, a strong blast of November wind knocked the old locust tree in the back garden to the ground. Luckily it didn't fall on the house and aside from some soil compression, no other damage occurred. Over the winter, spring and summer the gardeners have been contemplating a replacement tree. In September, looking for a new tree, two of the gardeners, Caroline Fesquet and Trish Alexander, took a road trip to visit several local nurseries. They found the one they wanted at Rock Crest Garden in Newfields, NH. In early October that tree, a Franklinia, or Franklin tree, took its place in the garden. Eventually the tree will be about 25 feet tall and flower in the fall with white blooms as the leaves turn scarlet. It's a very special tree that was native to the Altamaha River Valley in Georgia. Sometime in the early 19th century the tree became extinct in the wild, a victim of over-collection and disease attributed to the increased cultivation of the cotton plant. The tree exists as a specimen plant due to the efforts of William Bartram who collected Franklin seeds between 1773 and 1776. He took them back to Philadelphia and by 1781 those seeds provided stock trees that successfully flowered. It is from this initial stock that all Franklin trees now descend. Both William and his father John, were noted botanists. William named the new tree Franklinia to honor his father's close friendship with Benjamin Franklin. With the early lightning rod on the west side of the house, it seems fitting that a Franklin tree sits on the east side of the house. The Portsmouth Garden Club donated the Franklin tree to the House and we cannot thank them enough for their generosity.



*The Franklin tree arrives. Mariah Whitlock and Peter Heira of Rock Crest Garden and Caroline Fesquet, Warner House board member and Portsmouth Garden Club volunteer.
Photo by Jeff Hopper*

News of the new tree got around town. On short notice, a film crew from the nonprofit television station, Portsmouth Public Media, arrived to film a story about the tree and the partnership between the Garden Club and the House. The crew will return to film garden club members in action during the month of October and with any luck, there will be a short film on the gardens this year or early next year.

Notes from the Marketing Chair: Please read your enclosed letter from our Chair, Jeffrey Thomson. He addresses the date and Agenda for our Annual Meeting.

Jeff Hopper wrote the article on the Franklin tree. Thank you to Jeff. Thank you also to Melissa Walker for the information she provided.

Look for information in our next Newsletter about renovations to the windows on the Chapel Street side of the House and other projects in the works.

We wish you all a safe, healthy Thanksgiving, Happy Holiday season and a brighter New Year!

Carol Seely
Marketing Chair